

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration of this application in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 3-9, 11-17, 19-24 and 26-31 are presently active in this case.

Claim 31 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as unpatentable over Fujino (Japanese Patent No. JP 10-198129) in view of Kisu (Japanese Patent Publication No. JP 3-240076).

Claims 1, 3-9, 11-17, 19-24 and 26-30 were allowed. Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the indication of allowable subject matter.

In response to the rejection of Claim 31 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a), Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of this rejection and traverse the rejection, as discussed next.

Briefly recapitulating, Claim 31 relates to an image forming apparatus including: a charger that charges a body with a voltage in which an AC voltage is superimposed on a DC voltage, wherein the charger is not in contact with the body and is separated from the body by a gap; a humidity detecting unit that detects a humidity in a space between the charger and the body; and means for minimizing an effect of a change in a width of the gap between the charger and the body on the surface charge of the body.

As explained in Applicants' Specification from page 2, line 20 to page 3, line 12 and in corresponding Figure 1, Claim 31 improves upon background image forming apparatuses since the contactless charging of latent image carriers by a charging roller is improved, by addressing issues related to the variation of the gap width.

Turning now to the applied references, Fujino discloses a system electrifying the surface of a body, wherein the AC and DC current flowing into the electrifying roller are controlled to ensure uniform electrification.¹ However, Fujino fails to teach means for

¹ See Fujino in the Abstract.

minimizing an effect of a change in a width of the gap between the charger and the body on the surface charge of the body. Since Fujino's electrifying roller 2 is in contact with the photoconductor 1, there is no gap, as confirmed by the outstanding Office Action.²

Accordingly, there cannot be any means for minimizing an effect of *change in a width of the gap* between the charger and the body, contrary to what the outstanding Office Action states. Further, the outstanding Office Action rejects Applicants' Claim 31 based on the proposition that Kisu discloses a gap between a charger and a body,³ and that it would have been obvious to modify Fujino by importing this feature from Kisu to arrive at Applicants' claimed invention. Applicants respectfully submit, however, that Kisu does not remedy the deficiencies of Fujino, since Kisu also fails to disclose the above feature related to means for minimizing an effect of a change in a width of the gap between the charger and the body on the surface charge of the body, as next discussed.

Kisu discloses an electrostatic charging device that is close to a body to be charged with a gap of 5-300 μ m.⁴ Kisu explains that the charging of the body through a gap itself is sufficient to uniformly charge the body to a specific potential and polarity.⁵ Kisu is therefore entirely silent on means for minimizing an effect of a change in a width of the gap between the charger and the body on the surface charge of the body. Accordingly, a gap with a width of 5-300 μ m in Kisu *is not* a means for minimizing an effect of a change in a width of the gap on the surface charge of the body, as claimed.

Therefore, even if the combination of Fujino and Kisu is assumed to be proper, the combination fails to teach every element of the claimed invention. Specifically, the combination fails to teach the claimed means for minimizing an effect of a change in a width of the gap between the charger and the body on the surface charge of the body. Accordingly,

² See the outstanding Office Action at page 2, line 24.

³ See the outstanding Office Action at page 3, lines 1-3.

⁴ See Kisu in the Abstract.

⁵ See Kisu in the Abstract.

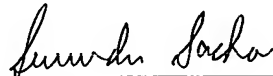
Applicants respectfully traverse, and request reconsideration of, this rejection based on these patents.⁶

Consequently, in view of the present Request for Reconsideration, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal Allowance. A Notice of Allowance also for Claim 31 is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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⁶ See MPEP 2142 stating, as one of the three "basic criteria [that] must be met" in order to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, that "the prior art reference (or references when combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations," (emphasis added). See also MPEP 2143.03: "All words in a claim must be considered in judging the patentability of that claim against the prior art."